

## WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1        1.    A switch capable of handling voice-over-IP (VoIP) traffic  
2 between calling devices and called devices, said switch comprising:

3            a plurality of call application nodes capable of  
4 executing call process server applications, wherein a first call  
5 process server application is executed on a first one of said  
6 plurality of call application nodes and is associated with a  
7 similar second call process server application executed on a second  
8 one of said plurality of call application nodes separate from said  
9 first call application node, said first and second call process  
10 server applications thereby forming a first load sharing group  
11 server application; and

12            a plurality of network address translation nodes capable  
13 of executing firewall server applications, wherein a first firewall  
14 server application is executed on a first one of said plurality of  
15 network address translation nodes and is associated with a similar  
16 second firewall server application executed on a second one of said  
17 plurality of network address translation nodes separate from said  
18 first network address translation node, said first and second  
19 firewall server applications thereby forming a second load sharing  
20 group server application, wherein VoIP traffic associated with VoIP  
21 calls is received by said second load sharing group server

22 application and said second load sharing group server application  
23 selects one of said first and second firewall server applications  
24 to verify that said VoIP traffic is authorized to access at least  
25 one of said call process server applications in said call  
26 application nodes according to a load distribution algorithm.

1 2. The switch as set forth in Claim 1 wherein said load  
distribution algorithm distributes said VoIP traffic in an  
alternating manner between said first and second firewall server  
applications.

3 3. The switch as set forth in Claim 1 wherein said load  
distribution algorithm distributes said VoIP traffic according to a  
current traffic load of said first firewall server application and  
4 a current traffic load of said second firewall server application.

1 4. The switch as set forth in Claim 3 wherein said load  
2 distribution algorithm distributes said VoIP traffic in order to  
3 maintain said current traffic load of said first firewall server  
4 application at a level substantially equal to said current traffic  
5 load of said second firewall server application.

1           5.    The switch as set forth in Claim 1 wherein said first  
2    firewall server application comprises a first primary-backup group  
3    server application, wherein said first primary-backup group server  
4    application comprises a first primary firewall process executed on  
5    said first network address translation node and a first backup  
6    firewall process associated with said first primary firewall  
7    process.

10085816  
20220824  
6.    The switch as set forth in Claim 5 wherein state  
information associated with said first primary firewall process is  
mirrored to said first backup firewall process associated with said  
first primary firewall process.

7.    The switch as set forth in Claim 6 wherein said first  
backup firewall process resides on said first network address  
translation node.

1           8.    The switch as set forth in Claim 6 wherein said first  
2    backup firewall process resides on a network address translation  
3    node separate from said first network address translation node.

1           9.    The switch as set forth in Claim 1 wherein said second  
2    firewall server application comprises a second primary-backup group  
3    server application, wherein said second primary-backup group server  
4    application comprises a second primary firewall process executed on  
5    said second network address translation node and a second backup  
6    firewall process associated with said second primary firewall  
7    process.

10.   The switch as set forth in Claim 9 wherein state  
information associated with said second primary firewall process is  
mirrored to said second backup firewall process associated with  
said second primary firewall process.

11.   The switch as set forth in Claim 10 wherein said second  
backup firewall process resides on said second network address  
translation node.

1           12.   The switch as set forth in Claim 10 wherein said second  
2    backup firewall process resides on a call application node separate  
3    from said second network address translation node.

1 13. A telecommunications network comprising:

2 a plurality of switches capable of handling voice-over-IP  
3 (VoIP) traffic between calling devices and called devices, each of  
4 said plurality of switches comprising:

5 a plurality of call application nodes capable of  
6 executing call process server applications, wherein a first  
7 call process server application is executed on a first one of  
8 said plurality of call application nodes and is associated  
9 with a similar second call process server application executed  
10 on a second one of said plurality of call application nodes  
11 separate from said first call application node, said first and  
12 second call process server applications thereby forming a  
13 first load sharing group server application; and

14 a plurality of network address translation nodes  
15 capable of executing firewall server applications, wherein a  
16 first firewall server application is executed on a first one  
17 of said plurality of network address translation nodes and is  
18 associated with a similar second firewall server application  
19 executed on a second one of said plurality of network address  
20 translation nodes separate from said first network address  
21 translation node, said first and second firewall server  
22 applications thereby forming a second load sharing group

23 server application, wherein VoIP traffic associated with VoIP  
24 calls is received by said second load sharing group server  
25 application and said second load sharing group server  
26 application selects one of said first and second firewall  
27 server applications to verify that said VoIP traffic is  
28 authorized to access at least one of said call process server  
29 applications in said call application nodes according to a  
30 load distribution algorithm; and

31 an Internet protocol (IP) packet network for  
32 interconnecting said plurality of switches; and

33 at least one media gateway coupled to said IP packet  
34 network.

14. The telecommunications network as set forth in Claim 13  
2 wherein said load distribution algorithm distributes said VoIP  
3 traffic in an alternating manner between said first and second  
4 firewall server applications.

1           15. The telecommunications network as set forth in Claim 13  
2 wherein said load distribution algorithm distributes said VoIP  
3 traffic according to a current traffic load of said first firewall  
4 server application and a current traffic load of said second  
5 firewall server application.

1           16. The telecommunications network as set forth in Claim 15  
2 wherein said load distribution algorithm distributes said VoIP  
3 traffic in order to maintain said current traffic load of said  
4 first firewall server application at a level substantially equal to  
5 said current traffic load of said second firewall server  
6 application.

1           17. The telecommunications network as set forth in Claim 13  
2 wherein said first firewall server application comprises a first  
3 primary-backup group server application, wherein said first  
4 primary-backup group server application comprises a first primary  
5 firewall process executed on said first network address translation  
6 node and a first backup firewall process associated with said first  
7 primary firewall process.

1 18. The telecommunications network as set forth in Claim 17  
2 wherein state information associated with said first primary  
3 firewall process is mirrored to said first backup firewall process  
4 associated with said first primary firewall process.

1 19. The telecommunications network as set forth in Claim 18  
2 wherein said first backup firewall process resides on said first  
3 network address translation node.

1 20. The telecommunications network as set forth in Claim 18  
2 wherein said first backup firewall process resides on a network  
3 address translation node separate from said first network address  
4 translation node.

1 21. The telecommunications network as set forth in Claim 13  
2 wherein said second firewall server application comprises a second  
3 primary-backup group server application, wherein said second  
4 primary-backup group server application comprises a second primary  
5 firewall process executed on said second network address  
6 translation node and a second backup firewall process associated  
7 with said second primary firewall process.

1           22. The telecommunications network as set forth in Claim 21  
2 wherein state information associated with said second primary  
3 firewall process is mirrored to said second backup firewall process  
4 associated with said second primary firewall process.

1           23. The telecommunications network as set forth in Claim 22  
2 wherein said second backup firewall process resides on said second  
3 network address translation node.

1           24. The telecommunications network as set forth in Claim 22  
2 wherein said second backup firewall process resides on a call  
3 application node separate from said second network address  
4 translation node.